

Evidence Discussion (CMM-312: Knee Surgery-Arthroscopic and Open Procedures: Diagnostic Arthroscopy)

Risks of diagnostic knee arthroscopy include but are not limited to failure to improve, iatrogenic articular cartilage damage, neurovascular injury, infection, ecchymosis, hemarthrosis, arthrofibrosis, deep venous thrombosis, pulmonary embolism, and death, as well as complications related to risks of general and local anesthesia. **1**

Given the potential possibility for significant complications, proper patient selection is crucial to minimize the risk-benefit ratio.

Symptoms may include pain, effusion, as well as mechanical symptoms such as blocked range of motion, weakness/giving way or buckling of the knee, or painful locking/clicking/catching/popping during weight-bearing activities. Supportive exam findings include joint effusion, joint line tenderness, and painful/limited range of motion. **2**

Imaging should confirm MRI /CT arthrogram findings which are inconclusive for internal derangement / pathology and plain radiographs that show absence of Kellgren-Lawrence Grade II or greater findings. **3**

It has been shown that many patients may improve with a course of conservative care and this may very well obviate the need for surgical treatment. **4**

As risk for major complications exists, symptoms, physical exam findings and imaging findings should support surgical intervention. Although the use of any coverage criteria includes the possible risk of delayed care, EviCore firmly believes the benefits of our evidence-based criteria best ensure patient safety and highly outweigh any clinical harms.

1. Friberger Pajalic K, Turkiewicz A, Englund M. Update on the risks of complications after knee arthroscopy. BMC Musculoskelet Disord. 2018 Jun 1;19(1):179.

2. Thorlund JB, Juhl CB, Roos EM, Lohmander LS. Arthroscopic surgery for degenerative knee: systematic review and meta-analysis of benefits and harms. BMJ. 2015 Jun 16;350:h2747.

3. Cotter EJ, Weissman AC, Yazdi AA, Muth SA, Cole BJ. Arthroscopic Debridement of Mild and Moderate Knee Osteoarthritis Results in Clinical Improvement at Short-Term Follow-Up: A Systematic Review. Arthroscopy. 2024 Mar 18:S0749-8063(24)00204-4.

4. Jones BQ, Covey CJ, Sineath MH Jr. Nonsurgical Management of Knee Pain in Adults. Am Fam Physician. 2015 Nov 15;92(10):875-83.